REMARKS

Claims 51 has been amended to depend from claim 50, to remove the rejection under 35 USC 112.

Attached hereto is a marked-up version of the changes made to the claims by the current amendment. The attachment is captioned "Version with markings to show changes made."

Claims 28-35, 40-49, and 52 stand rejected under 35 USC 103 as being obvious over Gajardo U.S. Patent 3,203,813. Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection and requests reconsideration.

Claim 28 recites a method of manufacturing a heat resistant product, that includes the following steps: (i) coating vermiculite granules with a ceramic binder, and curing/drying the binder to form precoated vermiculite granules; and (ii) coating the precoated vermiculite granules with a ceramic binder, and curing/drying the binder, wherein between 35% and 95% of the dry weight of the product is vermiculite having a particle size such that more than 60% of the vermiculite does not pass through a 1mm sieve.

The Gajardo et al. citation only discloses a process for producing a thermal insulating material, in which vermiculite is coated once with a binder and the composition is subsequently cured via heat treatment. See, for example, column 1 lines 55-59, column 2 lines 14-25, and column 6 lines 2-18, as noted by

the Examiner.

Therefore, Gajardo et al. neither discloses nor suggests a method of manufacturing a heat resistant product as defined in Applicant's claim 28. As summarized above, claim 28 defines a two-step process, the first step being coating vermiculite granules with a ceramic binder and curing or drying the coated granules to form pre-coated vermiculite granules, and the second step being coating the pre-coated vermiculite granules with a ceramic binder and curing or drying the binder, wherein between 35% and 95% of the dry weight of the product is vermiculite having a particle size such that more than 60% of the vermiculite does not pass through a 1mm sieve. In contrast, the disclosure in Gajardo et al. is limited to a one-step method of manufacture of a heat resistant product.

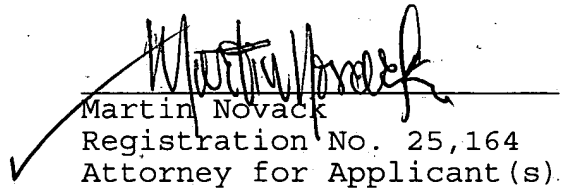
The two-step method according to the present claimed invention has distinct advantages over one-step methods such as that disclosed in Gajardo et al., as the method of the invention provides a heat resistant product with enhanced resistance to the absorption of fluids, such as water and water vapor. This property is particularly advantageous as absorption of excessive moisture may result in an undesirable reduction in the mechanical properties of the heat resistant product.

Therefore, it is clear that the method defined in claims 28-41 and, consequently, the heat resistant product as defined in claims 42-51 and the fire wall as defined in claim 52 are

inventive over the teachings of Gajardo et al. As such, all of the pending claims are patentable over the cited prior art.

In view of the foregoing it is believed that all claims of this application are now in condition for allowance, and such favorable action is respectfully solicited. In the event there are any remaining issues, however, it is asked that the Examiner kindly telephone the undersigned counsel collect so that they can be resolved.

Respectfully submitted,



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(S-38)

VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

IN THE CLAIMS:

Claim 51 has been amended as follows:

51 (amended). A product according to claim ~~42~~ 50, further comprising a phenolic glass laminate sandwiched between the honeycomb structure and the product.